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Autopsy x-rays branded fakes

Reuter-AP New York

Two United States Navy medical technicians who witnessed the autopsy of President Kennedy said yesterday that autopsy photographs and x-rays recently released by the Government had been tampered with and falsified.

Jerrol Custer, who took x-rays of Kennedy's body at Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland after his assassination on November 22, 1963, told a Manhattan news conference that the x-rays "are wrong."

He said the released x-rays showed a black hole where the right side of Kennedy's face should be, indicating that a portion of the face had been destroyed.

But he said: "There was no damage to his face and no part of his skull was missing on the forward part of his head. These are fake x-rays."

Photographer Floyd Riebe, who took pictures of the body during the autopsy, claims that the photographs released by the Government are "phony and not the photographs we took."

After the autopsy was completed, Custer said he was sent to an admiral's office at Bethesda where he was warned to "keep my mouth shut."

"Nothing was to be said of what I saw, what I did and that if I were to open my mouth, I would wind up in prison."

The news conference was called to rebut articles published last week in the Journal of the American Medical Association by two Navy pathologists who performed the autopsy on Kennedy and who support the official Warren Commission findings that the President was shot twice from behind by a lone assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald.

A subcommittee of the House of Representatives yesterday unanimously approved a bill to release secret records dealing with the assassination. Whether the documents hold new information remains to be seen.

Action by the Judiciary Committee, the whole House, the Senate and President Bush is still needed for the bill to become law.